and grants from other Government Agencies to the tune of Rs. 150 lakhs have also been received.

(f) The Government of Karnataka is providing the administrative, logistics and technical support in the organisation of the event and supporting the Bangalore University with adequate financial resources.

Indo-Brazil collaboration in Biotechnology

3255. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India and Brazil signed a MoU recently, on a work plan for collaboration in various fields of biotechnology; and

(b) if so, the details of the agreement?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT): (a) and (b) A Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation in Science and Technology was signed in July 2001 between the Ministries of Science and Technology of India and Brazil. Subsequently an agreed work plan for cooperation in Biotechnology was signed on October 23, 2002 at New Delhi between the Department of Biotechnology and the Ministry of Science and Technology, Brazil. The areas identified for collaboration are : agricultural and medical biotechnology, bioinformatics, functional and comparative genomics. Joint projects on Rice and Maize, some medicinal plants and bioprospecting of genes and molecules are of high priority. Research, training an exchange of scientists, workshops and technology transfer are the main components of the agreed work plan.

R&D fund for Drug Industry

3256. SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Planning Commission has finally earmarked a sum of Rs. 150 crore, as R&D promotion fund for the drug industry;

(b) if so, the reasons for delay in providing this fund;

(c) whether this fund would be operated by the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers; and

(d) if so, to what extent it would be helpful?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT): (a) to (d) Yes, Sir. The Planning Commission has made a provision of Rs. 150 crore under Department of Science and Technology in the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002—07) for establishing Pharmaceuticals Research and Development Support Fund (PRDSF) for promotion of R&D for drug industry. Government have decided that the said fund shall be operated by the Department of Science and Technology for the aforementioned purpose. Necessary follow-up action has been initiated by the Department to make the Fund operational.

Exposure to mercury poisoning in India

3257. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Centre for Science and Environment has undertaken a green rating project and found India being exposed to high levels of mercury poisoning, due to the companies producing caustic soda and chlorine, as reported in the Times of India of 3rd September, 2002, under the caption, Green rating sounds mercury alert; and

(b) if so, what are the details in this regard and the preventive steps proposed to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT): (a) and (b) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Decline in science students

†3258. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there has been a considerable decline in number of Science students during the last few years;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.